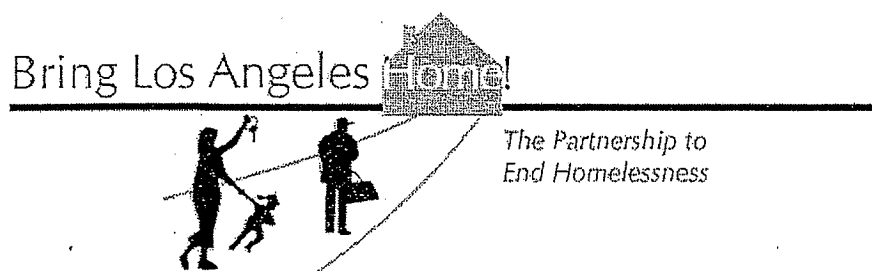


Homelessness in Los Angeles: A summary of recent research

prepared for



INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY
at the Weingart Center

PAUL TEPPER, DIRECTOR
566 S. SAN PEDRO STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90013
213.689.2280
<http://www.weingart.org/institute>
institute@weingart.org

March 2004

The materials contained within this report were in part compiled and prepared for a larger comparative study, funded by the National Science Foundation, of homelessness in the four global cities of Los Angeles, Paris, Sao Paulo, and Tokyo. The report, in modified form, will be incorporated into a book comparing and contrasting findings across the four cities. For information about that book, contact David A. Snow, principal investigator, University of California, Irvine, dsnow@uci.edu.

Executive Summary

CENSUS	Approximately 80,000 people are homeless each night in Los Angeles County.
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION	Homeless families and individuals can be found throughout the County with concentrations in particular areas, such as central and South Los Angeles.
FAMILY STATUS	Families, typically headed by single mothers, represent a growing percentage of the overall homeless population, with nightly estimates ranging from 20% to 43%.
YOUTH	Unaccompanied youth represent a small but significantly challenged group.
GENDER	One-third to one-half of homeless people are women and girls.
RACE/ETHNICITY	African Americans are greatly over-represented within the homeless population.
AGE	The average age of homeless adults is around 40 years.
VETERANS	Veterans are about twice as likely as all adults to be homeless.
CITIZENSHIP, RESIDENCY AND LENGTH OF TIME IN LOS ANGELES	Most homeless people in Los Angeles are from Los Angeles.
PHYSICAL HEALTH, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE	An estimated one-quarter of homeless adults are physically disabled and about 20% are victims of domestic violence.
SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH	The incidence of both substance abuse and mental illness is higher among homeless persons than in the community at large.
EDUCATION	About half of homeless adults have graduated from high school.
EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME	Homeless people have very low incomes, including the approximately 16% to 20% of homeless adults who are currently employed.
PUBLIC BENEFITS	Public benefits are underutilized or have been cut for many homeless individuals and families.
LENGTH OF TIME AND FREQUENCY	Families are homeless less frequently and for shorter periods than individuals.
SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS	Roughly 20% to 30% of homeless people are in shelters.

By 1984, there were an estimated 25,000 to 50,000 homeless people in Los Angeles County. In the early 1980s, newly incorporated and long established secular as well as religious nonprofit social service organizations began creating shelters and other programs to meet the needs of the "new homeless." The "new homeless" added families, single women, and recently unemployed men to the pool of people who did not have a roof over their heads.²

Today, there are an estimated 80,000 people homeless each night in the County.³

The growth in homelessness was mirrored by an increase in the number of shelter beds. In 1996 there were 10,800 beds in Los Angeles County. By 2000, there were 13,632 beds provided by 153 organizations. By 2003, the bed count had risen to 18,529, including the Cold-Wet Weather Program.⁴

Definition of homelessness

The most commonly cited definition of "homelessness" is from Section 11302 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. That Act defines a homeless person as an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence or a person who resides in a shelter, welfare hotel, transitional program or place not ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations, such as streets, cars, movie theatres, abandoned buildings, etc. The Act indicates that people in jail are not homeless.⁵

However, researchers, advocates and local, state and national government have not consistently used this or any other definition. Interpretations and definitions principally differ with regard to people who might be seen by some as perched on the edge of homelessness, such as a family living in a hotel or staying with friends.

For example, the U.S. Department of Education has an expanded definition of homelessness that includes "children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement", relying on Section 11434a of the McKinney-Vento Act.⁶

² Countywide Taskforce on the Homeless, *Interim Report on the Homeless*, Los Angeles County, November 1984.

³ Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*, Economic Roundtable, November, 2003, <http://bringlahome.org/reports.htm>; Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *Continuum of Care Narrative for SuperNOFA 2003 Application*, 2003, <http://lahsa.org/continuum.htm>; State of California, *A Summary Report on California's Programs to Address Homelessness*, March 2002, http://www.governor.ca.gov/govsite/msdocs/press_release/PR02_150_HomelessnessFinalReport.doc; Shelter Partnership, *The Number of Homeless People in Los Angeles City and County, July 1993 to June 1994*, 1995; Community Development Department, City of Los Angeles, *Consolidated Plan 2003 – 2008*, February 2003; County of Los Angeles, *1998-2003 Consolidated Plan*, 1998.

⁴ Economic Roundtable, *Homelessness in Los Angeles*, Community Meeting Presentation, 2003, <http://bringlahome.org/reports.htm>; Shelter Partnership, *Short-Term Housing Directory of Los Angeles County*, April 2000.

⁵ McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act [42 USC 11302].

⁶ McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act [42 USC 11434a].

concentration in metropolitan areas. In 2000 Los Angeles County had 28.1% of the state's population.¹¹

City level research within the County of Los Angeles has revealed a range of homelessness rates, with many clustering in or around 1% of the population. The following chart highlights both county and city level enumerations.

Regional Homeless Counts and Rates ¹²				
Region	Year	Time Period	Unduplicated Homeless Count	Approximate % of population that is homeless
Long Beach (city)	2003	Day	5,845	1.3%
Los Angeles (county)	2003	Day	82,096	0.9%
East San Gabriel Valley (region)	2003	Day	2,703	0.3%
Glendale (city)	2003	Day	472	0.2%
		15 Days	1,410	0.7%
Pomona, La Verne, Claremont (cities)	2002	Month	1,389	0.6%
Los Angeles (county)	2002	Day	78,600	0.8%
		Year	253,918	2.7%
Pomona (city)	2002	15 Days	1,389	0.9%
Pasadena (city)	2000	Day	879	0.7%
		Month	1,832	1.4%
California	1999	Day	361,000	1.1%
Santa Monica (city)	1999	Day	1,037	1.1%
Los Angeles (county)	1994	Day	84,300	0.9%
		Year	236,368	2.6%
Los Angeles (county)	1992	Day	36,800 - 59,100	0.4% - 0.7%
Pasadena (city)	1992	Day	1,017	0.8%
San Bernardino, CA (county)	2003	Day	5,270-8,351	0.4%
Orange, CA (county)	2001	Day	19,740	0.7%
Monterey, CA (county)	2002	Day	3,071	0.8%

¹¹ State of California, Interagency Task Force on Homelessness, *Summary Report on California's Programs to Address Homelessness*.

¹² Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA: City of Long Beach, Homeless Services Coordinator's Report – Homeless Count and Assessment Survey*; Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *Continuum of Care Narrative for SuperNOFA 2003 Application*; Institute for Urban Research and Development, *East San Gabriel Valley Homeless Count – Preliminary Report*, March 2003; City of Glendale, *unduplicated count 03 table staff report*; Glen Gamst, *City of Pomona, La Verne, and Claremont 2002 Homeless Count – Final Report*; Gilbert Saldate, *Memorandum Re: Pomona Homeless Count 2000*; Institute for Urban Research and Development, *The City of Pasadena Homeless Count 2000: Final Report*; State of California, *A Summary Report on California's Programs to Address Homelessness*; Daniel Flaming, Mark Drayse, Rebecca Drayse and Peter Force, *Special Census, City of Santa Monica Homeless Residents, October 27, 1999*, Economic Roundtable, December 1999, <http://www.economicrt.org>; Shelter Partnership, *The Number of Homeless People in Los Angeles City and County, July 1993 to June 1994*; Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear, *Downtown Strategic Plan*, 1992; Institute for Urban Research & Development, *City of Pasadena 1992 Homeless Count: Final Report*, 1993, <http://www.pasadenaresearch.com/homelessness.html>; Applied Survey Research, *San Bernardino County 2003 Homeless Census and Survey*, 2003, <http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/mainmenu.shtml>; Jennifer Mena, O.C. *Homeless Count Up 6%*, Los Angeles Times, June 1, 2001; Applied Survey Research, *2002 Monterey County Homeless Census*, 2002.

Los Angeles County is sometimes divided among eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) for the purposes of service analysis and funding distribution. These SPAs roughly coincide with popular notions of the regions of the county.

The 2003 Economic Roundtable report found that 46% of county homeless residents receiving public assistance were in the South Los Angeles and Metro Service Planning Areas, with diminishing percentages in the San Gabriel Valley, South Bay, San Fernando Valley, Antelope Valley, East Los Angeles, and the West Side. They found that, when viewed as a percentage of the overall population or the poverty population, the Antelope Valley and South LA show the highest percentages of homeless people.¹⁶

A 1997 telephone survey conducted by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Health Services, also found higher concentrations of formerly homeless adults in the Metro and South Service Planning Areas and a slightly lower than average level in the West Service Planning Area. The Metro Area encompasses downtown Los Angeles, including "Skid Row", Hollywood, and Boyle Heights, while the South Area includes South Los Angeles, Watts, and Compton, all very poor neighborhoods. In contrast the West Area captures the wealthier communities of Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, Brentwood, and Bel Air.¹⁷

The 1995 Shelter Partnership report indicated that the City of Los Angeles had 46 to 49 percent of the county's homeless population. This is not surprising given that the City, which has roughly one third of the County's population, had a Census 2000 poverty rate of 22.1%, significantly higher than the County's rate of 17.9%. The City includes nearly all of the Metro Service Planning Area and much of the South Service Planning Area.¹⁸

The location of homeless shelter beds offers an indirect means of examining distribution of homeless people. Shelter siting is a complicated issue, driven by a combination of factors, including service demand, development opportunities, development capacity, funding, public policy, NIMBYism, zoning, and the attitude of elected officials. Although there is not an absolute correlation between the locality of homeless persons and shelters, shelters offer some insight as to where homeless persons are located.

Countywide Distribution of Shelter Beds by Service Planning Area (SPA), 2003 (excluding Cold-Wet Weather beds) ¹⁹		
(SPA)	% Individual Beds	% Family Beds
Antelope Valley (SPA 1)	3%	3%
San Fernando Valley (SPA 2)	9%	18%
San Gabriel Valley (SPA 3)	2%	4%
Metro (SPA 4)	54%	40%
West (SPA 5)	10%	3%
South (SPA 6)	10%	21%
East (SPA 7)	7%	5%
South Bay (SPA 8)	6%	7%

¹⁶ Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*.

¹⁷ Michael Cousineau, Brian Shimabakura, *The Five Year Prevalence of Homelessness in Los Angeles County: Findings from the LA County Health Survey*.

¹⁸ Shelter Partnership, *The Number of Homeless People in Los Angeles City and County, July 1993 to June 1994*; US Census Bureau, *P87. Poverty Status in 1999 by Age*, Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 3(SF3) – Sample Data.

¹⁹ Economic Roundtable, *Homelessness in Los Angeles*, Community Meeting Presentation, 2003.

Director of LAHSA, noted an "...explosion in homelessness among families."²¹

Most but not all sub-county studies, anecdotal evidence, and state and national estimates yield family estimates of one-third or more of the homeless population. The 2003 Long Beach study found that 35.4% of that city's homeless population were children. This suggests that families account for about half of the homeless population in Long Beach. The 2003 Glendale count reported a nightly homeless family rate of 40%. The 2002 Pomona study found that families accounted for 26% of the homeless population while a 2003 study of 16 cities in the East San Gabriel Valley (including Pomona) said that 33.9% were members of families. The East San Gabriel Valley study noted that children made up 22.8% of the homeless population in that region.²²

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness reported that on a nightly basis in 1996, 66% of homeless people in the nation are single. Over the course of a year this national percentage falls to 50%. The State of California indicated "about two-thirds of California's homeless are single adults, while the other third are families."²³

As with counts, the time frame being examined has a profound impact on demographic characteristics. This is particularly apparent when comparing single individuals to families. There is general agreement that the percentage of families among those who are homeless is higher on an annual basis than in a point-in-time analysis. This variation is primarily due to two factors: families are typically homeless less frequently and for shorter periods than are single individuals. As a consequence, more families move in and out of homelessness, while the pool of single individuals is more constant.

Families appear to be overwhelmingly headed by a single parent mother. Poor homeless families more commonly report spousal abuse, child abuse, drug use, mental health problems, and weaker support networks than poor non-homeless families. Nationally, the average homeless family had 2.2 children.²⁴

²¹ Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *Continuum of Care Narrative for SuperNOFA 2003 Application*; County of Los Angeles, *1998-2003 Consolidated Plan*; City of Los Angeles, *Consolidated Plan 2003-2008*, February 2003; U.S. Conference of Mayors, *Hunger and Homelessness Survey: A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities, A 25-City Survey*, December 2003 and December 2002; Stephanie Armour, *Homelessness grows as more live check-to-check; Families end up on streets after financial catastrophes strike*, USA Today [FINAL Edition], pg. A.01, Aug 12, 2003.

²² City of Long Beach, *Homeless Services Coordinator's Report – Homeless Count and Assessment*; City of Glendale, *unduplicated count 03 table staff report*; Gilbert Saldate, *Memorandum Re: Pomona Homeless Count*; Institute for Urban Research and Development, *East San Gabriel Valley Homeless Count – Preliminary Report*.

²³ Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*, Interagency Council on the Homeless, December 1999, <http://www.huduser.org/publications/homeless/homelessness/contents.html>; State of California, Interagency Task Force on Homelessness, *Summary Report on California's Programs to Address Homelessness*.

²⁴ Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs Assessment for Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, June – August 2002*; David Wood Burciaga Valdez, Toshi Hayashi, A. Shin, *Homeless and housed families in Los Angeles: A study comparing demographic, economic, and family function characteristics*, American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 80, Issue 9, September 1990; Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*.

Among single people nationally, 77% were men and 23% were women. Many Los Angeles studies of single homeless people mirrored national reports, showing men representing about three quarters of the single population. The 2000 Cold Wet Weather study found that 80% of those surveyed were male and the 1999 Santa Monica census reported that 72% were male.²⁸

Among families the overwhelming majority of adults are women. Nationally, women made up 84% of the adults in families.²⁹

Race/Ethnicity

Principal Finding:	African Americans are greatly over-represented within the homeless population.
---------------------------	---

Overall, African Americans are disproportionately represented among the homeless population in Los Angeles with estimates ranging from 17% to 50%, compared to 10% within the total population. Latinos and Asians are underrepresented, when compared to their presence in Los Angeles. Latinos are especially underrepresented when compared to the share of Latinos below the poverty line in the overall population. Studies differ regarding the degree of homelessness among Whites, with estimates ranging from significantly under to roughly proportionate compared to their presence in the entire County population.³⁰

²⁸ Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*; Shelter Partnership, *A Report on Cold/Wet Weather Shelter Utilization in Los Angeles County*; Daniel Flaming, Mark Drayse, Rebecca Drayse and Peter Force, *Special Census, City of Santa Monica Homeless Residents*.

²⁹ Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*; Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; March 2003; City of Glendale, *unduplicated count 03 table staff report*; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Survey for the Cities of Pomona, La Verne, and Claremont, June – August 2002*; Joe Colletti, *City of Pasadena Homeless Surveys*.

³⁰ U.S. Conference of Mayors, *Hunger and Homelessness Survey: A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities, A 25-City Survey*, December 2003; Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; Institute for Urban Research and Development, *East San Gabriel Valley Homeless Count – Preliminary Report*; City of Long Beach, *Homeless Services Coordinator's Report – Homeless Count and Assessment Survey*; Joe Colletti, *Homelessness in The City of Pasadena – Preliminary Report*, March 2002; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs Assessment for Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, June – August 2002*; Gilbert Saldate, *Memorandum Re: Pomona Homeless Count 2000*, February 25, 2003; Institute for Urban Research and Development, *The City of Pasadena 2000 Homeless Count: Final Report*; Shelter Partnership, *A Report on Cold/Wet Weather Shelter Utilization in Los Angeles County*; Daniel Flaming, Mark Drayse, Rebecca Drayse and Peter Force, *Special Census, City of Santa Monica Homeless Residents*; City of Pasadena Homeless Surveys, *Memorandum to Frank Clark*, May 7, 2001; Michael Cousineau, Brian Shimabakura, *The Five Year Prevalence of Homelessness in Los Angeles County: Findings from the LA County Health Survey*; Michele D. Kipke, Ellen Iverson, *A Profile of Street Youth in Hollywood*; Michael Cousineau, *A Profile of Urban Encampments in Central Los Angeles*, 1993; Joseph Colletti, *The City of Pasadena 1992 Homeless Count: Final Report*, 1994; Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear, *Downtown Strategic Plan: Characteristics of the Homeless Population in Downtown Los Angeles*, Downtown Strategic Plan Advisory Committee, May 1992; Elaine Christiansen, Robert L Nielsen, Barbara G McPherson, *Survey of Homeless Persons in Los Angeles' Skid Row*, The Gallup Organization and the Los Angeles Mission, October 1992.

Age

Principal Finding:	<i>The average age of homeless adults is around 40 years.</i>
---------------------------	--

The majority of homeless adults are between 18 and 64 years old with a very small number of senior citizens. Women are generally younger than men with adult females outnumbering males in the thirty years and under category while males make up a majority of the population over thirty. Most recent studies report that the average age of single homeless individuals is around 40 years old. This includes Pomona (41 years), Pomona, La Verne and Claremont (41 years) and 2000 Cold Wet Weather shelters (42 years). Some earlier studies of single individuals indicated a slightly younger population, including the Downtown Strategic Plan (35-36 years) and the Gallup Survey (38 years for men, 34 years for women). The Pasadena studies found homeless women comprise a growing segment of the younger population while homeless men represent an increasing percentage of the older homeless population.³⁴

Veterans

Principal Finding:	<i>Veterans are about twice as likely as all adults to be homeless.</i>
---------------------------	--

Veterans represent around 14% to 20% of the homeless population, compared with 9% of the overall Los Angeles County population. Outlying cities tended to report lower percentages of veterans than downtown. Vietnam veterans make up the largest block of homeless veterans.³⁵

The Los Angeles Homeless Male Veterans Study found that over 30% of those surveyed had been homeless more than one time. Half had lived in Los Angeles for 15 years or more. Half had experienced at least three serious psychiatric symptoms during their life. Alcohol had been used by 60% and other drugs by over 40%. Most of these veterans (86%) had over 12 years of education. Ethnically, 57% were White, 39% were Black, and 4% were Hispanic. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports that nationally 98% of homeless veterans are male; the vast majority are single; most come from poor communities; 85% completed high school; 45% have mental illness; over half

³⁴ Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; Gilbert Saldate, *Memorandum Re: Pomona Homeless Count*; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs Assessment for Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, June – August 2002*; Shelter Partnership, *A Report on Cold/Wet Weather Shelter Utilization in Los Angeles County*; Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear, *Downtown Strategic Plan: Characteristics of the Homeless Population in Downtown Los Angeles*; Elaine Christiansen, Robert L. Nielsen, Barbara G. McPherson, *Survey of Homeless Persons in Los Angeles' Skid Row*; Joe Colletti, *City of Pasadena Homeless Surveys*, Memorandum to Frank Clark, May 7, 2001.

³⁵ Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *Continuum of Care Narrative for SuperNOFA 2001 Application*, 2001; Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; City of Los Angeles, *Consolidated Plan 2003 – 2008*; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Survey for the Cities of Pomona, La Verne, and Claremont, June – August 2002*; Joe Colletti, *Homelessness in the City of Pasadena, Preliminary Report*; Gilbert Saldate, *Memorandum Re: Pomona Homeless Count*.

The Economic Roundtable study of homeless welfare recipients found that 5% were from outside the United States. The 2002 Pasadena study found that around 86% of the sample was U.S. born. In Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, the first generation immigrant figure among homeless people was 21%.³⁹

Health

Physical Health, Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Principal Finding:	<i>An estimated one-quarter of homeless adults are physically disabled and about 20% are victims of domestic violence.</i>
---------------------------	---

Most studies document that the physical health of homeless persons is worse than that of non-homeless persons. Major reported complaints were traumatic injuries, flu, skin disorders, upper respiratory tract infections, dyspepsia, infected abrasions, dental needs, vision care, and unintended pregnancies. Tuberculosis rates are higher, particularly in downtown. There is some evidence that homeless individuals are at an increased risk of cancer.⁴⁰

It is estimated that roughly 25% of homeless persons suffer from long term or permanent disabilities. The Economic Roundtable study noted that overall, one-fifth of those studied suffered from a physical disability. The 2002 Pasadena study cited a 27.9% physical disability rate and the Pomona, La Verne, Claremont report indicated a 33% physical disability rate. The incidence of HIV/AIDS appears to be higher than the general population, particularly in the downtown/Skid Row area. The Downtown Women's Needs Assessment (2001) noted that 3.4% of those surveyed reported that they were HIV+. The corresponding figures for the City of Los Angeles; Pomona, La Verne, Claremont; and Pasadena were 3%, 2.7%, and 1%, respectively.⁴¹

³⁹ Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; Michael Cousineau, *Comparing Adults in Los Angeles County Who Have And Have Not Been Homeless*; Joe Colletti, *Homelessness in the City of Pasadena – Preliminary Report*; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs Assessment for Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, June – August 2002*.

⁴⁰ Michael Cousineau, Kiki Nocella, Tracey Cross, Maria-Estrella Jefferson, *Neglect on the Streets: The Health and Mental Health Status and Access to Care for the Homeless Adults and Children in Central Los Angeles*, University of Southern California, Keck School of Medicine, Division of Community Health, June 2003, http://abbc3.hsc.usc.edu/familymed/communityhealth/pdfs/Weingart_final.qxd.pdf; Lillian Gelberg, Christopher Panarites, Hal Morgenstern, Barbara Leake, Ronald Anderson, Paul Koegel, *Tuberculosis Skin Testing Among Homeless Adults*, *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, January 1997; Lillian Gelberg, Lawrence Linn, D.J. Rosenberg, *Dental Health of Homeless Adults*, *Spec. Care Dentist*, Vol. 8 Issue 4, July 1988; Michael Cousineau, Brian Shimabakura, *The Five Year Prevalence of Homelessness in Los Angeles County: Findings from the LA County Health Survey*; Becky Dennison, Pete White, Anisa Mendizabal, Ricky Mantley, *Downtown Women's Needs Assessment*; Michael Cousineau, *A Profile of Urban Encampments in Central Los Angeles*; Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear, *Downtown Strategic Plan: Characteristics of the Homeless Population in Downtown Los Angeles*; Sara Chau and M. Chin, *Cancer Risk Behaviors and Screening Rates Among Homeless Adults in Los Angeles County*, *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*, May 2002; Lillian Gelberg, Barbara Leake, Ronald Anderson, *The Behavioral Model for Vulnerable Populations: Application to Medical Care Use and Outcomes for Homeless People*, Health Services Resource, February 2000.

⁴¹ Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; City of Los Angeles, *Consolidated Plan 2003 – 2008*; Joe Colletti, *Homelessness in the City of Pasadena – Preliminary Report*; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs*

The likelihood of being physically assaulted while on the street is also high. In Pomona, La Verne, and Claremont, 34% of those surveyed had been assaulted. In Pasadena 16% of women and 25% of men had been victims of assault while living on the street.⁴⁶

Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Principal Finding:	<i>The incidence of both substance abuse and mental illness is higher among homeless persons than in the community at large.</i>
---------------------------	---

The incidence of both substance abuse and mental illness is higher among homeless persons than the community at large. These issues arise more commonly with single homeless individuals than with families.

Estimates of substance abuse by single homeless individuals in Los Angeles range from one-third to two-thirds of the population. The U.S. Conference of Mayors report noted that 34% were substance abusers. A Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) report noted that among homeless individuals, 49% are chronic substance abusers, and 16% are dual diagnosed.⁴⁷

The City of Los Angeles' 2003 - 2008 Consolidated Plan cites an overall homeless mental illness rate of 20.8% and a dual diagnosis rate of 13%. The City of Los Angeles notes that mental illness and dual diagnosis is seven times higher for individuals than families. Nationally, the Interagency Council on the Homeless indicated that in the month prior to the survey, 27% reported alcohol and/or drug problems, 17% mental health problems, and 23% mental health and substance abuse problems.⁴⁸

The Pomona, La Verne, Claremont report notes that 14% of those surveyed currently use marijuana, 42% drink alcohol, 18% have been hospitalized in an alcohol and drug program, and 35% have been in an AA/12 step program. The most commonly reported

among homeless adults, American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 85, Issue 12, December 1995; Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*.

⁴⁶ Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs Assessment for Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, June – August 2002*; Joe Colletti, *Homelessness in The City of Pasadena – Preliminary Report*.

⁴⁷ Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs Assessment for Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, June – August 2002*; U.S. Conference of Mayors, *Hunger and Homelessness Survey: A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities, A 25-City Survey*, December 2003; Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *2001 Los Angeles Continuum of Care, Exhibit 1 Narrative*; Michael Cousineau, *A Profile of Urban Encampments in Central Los Angeles*; Joe Colletti, *Homelessness in The City of Pasadena – Preliminary Report, 2002*.

⁴⁸ City of Los Angeles, *2003-2008 Consolidated Plan*; Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*; Paul Koegel, Greer Sullivan, Audrey Burnam, Sally Morton, Suzanne Wenzel, *Utilization of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services among Homeless Adults in Los Angeles*, Medical Care, Vol. 37, Issue 3, March 1999; City of Los Angeles, *2003-2008 Consolidated Plan*; Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*; Paul Koegel, Greer Sullivan, Audrey Burnam, Sally Morton, Suzanne Wenzel, *Utilization of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services among Homeless Adults in Los Angeles*, Medical Care, Vol. 37, Issue 3, March 1999.

48% had been incarcerated during that period.⁵⁴

The Downtown Strategic plan compared homeless people to housed individuals in the same area and found that homeless people suffered higher rates of both lifetime and recent psychiatric disorders. For homeless people, the life-time incidence of schizophrenia was 26 times higher and manic episodes 18 times higher. The Downtown Women's Needs Assessment found that 41% of those surveyed were affected by mental illness. It also reported that women who have lived downtown for more than two years were more likely to have experienced mental illness than those who lived there for a shorter period. Service providers of the County's Cold Wet Weather shelters, which principally serve single individuals, believed that 64% of those served were mentally ill.⁵⁵

The Course of Homelessness studies found that those with mental illness "fared significantly worse in terms of physical health, level of subsistence needs met, victimization, and subjective quality of life" in spite of a higher likelihood of receiving public welfare benefits than homeless people who were not mentally ill.⁵⁶

Economics

Education

Principal Finding:	About half of homeless adults have graduated from high school.
---------------------------	---

Nationally, 2% of homeless adults have a college degree; 22% have completed some college; 38% have a high school diploma, GED certificate or Vocational Training Certificate only; and 39% did not finish high school. The educational profile of homeless people appears to be slightly more polarized in Los Angeles, with a greater number having a college degree and a greater number not graduating from high school. Several studies have found that high school graduates, including those with additional education, amount to 50% or slightly more of the total Los Angeles homeless population, while college graduation rates are at 10% or higher. In Pasadena, half of those surveyed had completed high school, 36% had some college or post high school education, 10% were college graduates, and 4% had post graduate education. There appears to be major differences in education levels between single individuals and adults in families. The 2003 Economic Roundtable study reported that among adults in families, 10% had a BA or higher, 48% had graduated high school and may have had some college, and 43% did not graduate high school. The figures for single people

⁵⁴ State of California, Department of Mental Health, *Effectiveness of Integrated Services for Homeless Adults with Serious Mental Illness – 2003*, May 2003, <http://www.dmh.ca.gov/PGRE/leg%20rpt%202001.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear, *Downtown Strategic Plan: Characteristics of the Homeless Population in Downtown Los Angeles*; Becky Dennison, Pete White, Anisa Mendizabal, Ricky Mantley, *Downtown Women's Needs Assessment*; Shelter Partnership, *A Report on Cold/Wet Weather Shelter Utilization in Los Angeles County*.

⁵⁶ J. Greer Sullivan, M. Audrey Burnam, Paul Koegel, Jan Hollenberg, *Quality of Life of Homeless Persons with Mental Illness: Results from the Course-of-Homelessness Study*, Psychiatric Services, Vol. 51, No. 9, pp 1135-1141, September 2000.

workers from downtown Los Angeles found that 90% had incomes below \$1,000/month.⁶⁰

The percentage of homeless adults with a history of employment is higher than the level of those currently employed. The Economic Roundtable study, *Homeless Workers: A Labor Market Analysis* (1997), found that of those surveyed, 76% of adults who were homeless had been employed for some or all of the two years prior to becoming homeless. In downtown Los Angeles "Three-quarters (77%) had held jobs that lasted longer than one year, over half (54%) had held jobs that lasted longer than two years, and nearly one-third (30%) had held jobs lasting longer than five years." The study continued, "Once homeless, lasting employment is persistently elusive. Fifty-nine percent earned nothing and 70% earned less than \$1,000 in annual income following their participation in an employment program and search for a new job."⁶¹

Among street youth, 52% earned money panhandling, 23% received money from family, friends and others, 21% made money from sex or prostitution, 19% had jobs, and 16% dealt drugs.⁶²

Public Benefits

Principal Finding:	Public benefits are underutilized or have been cut for many homeless individuals and families.
---------------------------	---

While some homeless people avail themselves of public benefits, most studies indicated that the majority do not. Studies show that 42% to 77% of homeless people do not receive the public benefits to which they are entitled. The higher figure emerges from a study of those living in encampments. The Economic Roundtable reported that 15% of homeless families and 48% of homeless single individuals did not receive any public benefits in the year they became homeless. However, at the time of the interviews, 22% of the homeless families in the Winter Shelter program reported receiving public benefits and two-thirds of all homeless families interviewed had recently lost their public assistance benefits. The Course of Homelessness data set revealed that over 58% of the homeless individuals interviewed "received government transfers in the 30 days prior to the interview, while one-third had received cash assistance from a family member or friend."⁶³

⁶⁰ Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs Assessment for Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, June – August 2002*; Joe Colletti, *Homelessness in The City of Pasadena – Preliminary Report, 2002*.

⁶¹ Daniel Flaming and Mark Drayse, *Homeless Workers: A Labor Market Analysis*, Economic Roundtable, August 1997, <http://www.economicrt.org>.

⁶² Michele D. Kipke, Ellen Iverson, *A Profile of Street Youth in Hollywood*.

⁶³ Michael Cousineau, *A Profile of Urban Encampments in Central Los Angeles*; Patrick Burns, Daniel Flaming, Brent Haydamack, *Homeless in LA*; Robert F. Schoeni, Paul Koegel, *Economic Resources of the Homeless: Evidence from Los Angeles*, *Contemporary Economic Policy*, Vol. XVI, pp 295-308, July 1998.

been homeless for more than one year, with 42% of families homeless for less than two months and 31% of individuals homeless for less than one month.⁶⁷

The 1999 report, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve*, found that in 1996, 24% of currently homeless families, and 51% of currently homeless individuals had been homeless for more than one year. Among formerly homeless people, 22% had been homeless for more than one year.⁶⁸

Among street youth, 19% had been homeless for less than 2 months, 31% were homeless 2 months to 12 months, and half (50%) had been homeless for over one year.⁶⁹

Both nationally and locally, single individuals are more likely to experience repeated incidences of homelessness when compared with families. Nationally, the Interagency Council on Homelessness found that 37% of the single individuals surveyed had been homeless three or more times compared with 23% of the families.⁷⁰

Slightly over half (52%) of the single individuals using the county's Cold Wet Weather shelters were taking advantage of the winter shelter for the first time. One-quarter (25%) were second-time users, while 13% had used the shelter for four or more winters. Among those in urban encampments, 2.2% has been there less than 1 month; 45.6% lived in encampment from 1-6 months; 17.1% from 7-12 months; and 35.1% one year or longer.⁷¹

Sleeping Arrangements

Principal Finding:	Roughly 20% to 30% of homeless people are in shelters.
---------------------------	---

Studies use both varying definitions of homelessness as well as differing choice lists of sleeping arrangement options. As noted elsewhere, some researchers considered people homeless if they were staying with family or friends for a short period of time. For example, the 1997 Department of Health Services survey found that 57% had stayed with family or friends while homeless; 35% had been in a shelter or on the streets; and 8% had been both doubled up and in a shelter or on the streets.⁷²

⁶⁷ Glen Gamst, *Homeless Needs Assessment for Pomona, La Verne, Claremont, June – August 2002*; Becky Dennison, Pete White, Anisa Mendizabal, Ricky Mantley, *Downtown Women's Needs Assessment*; Shelter Partnership, *The Number of Homeless People in Los Angeles City and County, July 1993 to June 1994*.

⁶⁸ Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*.

⁶⁹ Michele D. Kipke, Ellen Iverson, *A Profile of Street Youth in Hollywood*.

⁷⁰ Interagency Council on the Homeless, *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*, Interagency Council on the Homeless.

⁷¹ Shelter Partnership, *A Report on Cold/Wet Weather Shelter Utilization in Los Angeles County*; Michael Cousineau, *A Profile of Urban Encampments in Central Los Angeles*.

⁷² Michael Cousineau, Brian Shimabakura, *The Five Year Prevalence of Homelessness in Los Angeles County: Findings from the LA County Health Survey*.

Principal Reports and Studies

The following is a selection of some of the major research conducted over the past twenty years regarding homelessness in Los Angeles. For citations to these reports as well as a more extensive listing of over 400 studies, reports and resources about homelessness in Los Angeles, please visit the Institute's web site, <http://www.weingart.org/institute> and search the Institute catalogs.

Homeless in LA: A Working Paper for the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Los Angeles County, (2003)

Integrated analysis of several datasets, including LA County Department of Public Social Services LEADER case records, LA County Department of Public Social Services GAIN, U.S. Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), Winter Shelter data, National Survey of Homes Assistance Programs and Clients (NSHAPC), Downtowns Homeless Jobseekers.

Neglect on the Streets: The Health and Mental Health Status and Access to Care for the Homeless Adults and Children in Central Los Angeles, (2003)

An assessment of the health and mental health needs of homeless in people Central Los Angeles.

City of Long Beach 2003 Homeless Count (unpublished)

A census of homeless persons in Long Beach, California

Pomona Homeless Count 2002 (unpublished)

A census of homeless persons in Pomona, California.

Pomona Homeless Needs Assessment (unpublished)

A survey of approximately one-third of those interviewed in the Pomona homeless count.

San Bernardino County 2003 Homeless Census and Survey (2003)

Report based upon a one day census of people who are homeless on the streets and in shelters, as well as sample survey of people who are homeless.

Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Homeless Advisory Committee Report (2003)

Report from the Sheriff's Homeless Advisory Committee.

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2003 Continuum of Care (2003)

This narrative describes LAHSA's analysis of homelessness in Los Angeles, and includes their estimate of the community need. They synthesize a variety of data sources to obtain their estimates.

2003-2008 Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan for the City of Los Angeles (2003)

A description of the City's housing and community development needs and priorities.

A Report on Housing for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS in the City and the County of Los Angeles (1999)

Study examined data collected in 1997 from sixty-one housing programs, thirty-four social services and health care programs and 785 persons with AIDS located at seventy-seven housing, social services, and health care sites.

Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve, Finding of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (1999)

This landmark 1996 study surveyed 76 metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas across the country.

1998-2003 Consolidated Plan for the Los Angeles Urban County (1998)

The County's housing and community development needs and priorities.

Homeless Women's Study (1997)

This study examined the severity of homelessness, social and family characteristics, subsistence activities and alcohol and drug abuse or dependence as predictors of major violence among homeless women in Los Angeles County.

The Five-Year Prevalence of Homelessness in Los Angeles County: Findings from the LA County Health Survey (1997)

A presentation drawn from data collected by the County of Los Angeles Department of Health Services in their biennial telephone survey of close to 10,000 adults in Los Angeles County.

A Profile of Street Youth in Hollywood (1997)

Published by the AIDS Evaluation of Street Outreach Project, Division of Adolescent Medicine, Children's Hospital Los Angeles. It was based on two years of ethnographic research and interviews conducted with street youth in Hollywood, between the ages of 12 and 24.

The Number of Homeless People in Los Angeles County (1995)

This study utilized a mixed methodology, indirect count, principally based upon government welfare data to estimate the number of homeless individuals and families in Los Angeles along with some basic demographic characteristics.

A Profile of Urban Encampments in Central Los Angeles (1993)

Interviews were conducted with 134 people residing in 42 encampments in and around downtown Los Angeles.

Survey of Homeless Persons in Los Angeles' Skid Row (1992)

This survey, conducted by the Gallup Organization for the Los Angeles Mission, interviewed 655 homeless individuals in a 24 block area of Skid Row.